ISMAEL

Taleem & Tarbiyat Magazine for Waqfeen-e-Nau

QUARTERLY | ISSUE #18 | APRIL-JUNE 2020

Khilafat

"Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them;"

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا
الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ كَمَا
اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

Hadhrat Hakeem Maulvi Nooruddin (ra)

Khalifatul Masih I
(1908-1914)

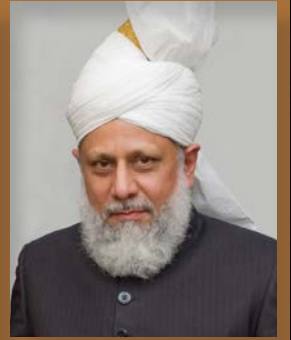
Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra)

Khalifatul Masih II
(1914-1965)

Hadhrat Hafiz Mirza Nasir Ahmad (rh)

Khalifatul Masih III
(1965-1982)

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh)

Khalifatul Masih IV
(1982-2003)

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aa)

Khalifatul Masih V
(2003-Present)

Promised Messiah (as) states..

"So dear friends! since it is the Sunnatullah, from time immemorial, that God Almighty shows two Manifestations so that the two false joys of the opponents be put to an end, it is not possible now that God should relinquish His Sunnah of old. So do not grieve over what I have said to you; nor should your hearts be distressed. For it is essential for you to witness the second Manifestation also, and its Coming is better for you because it is everlasting the continuity of which will not end till the Day of Judgement. "

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FROM THE EDITOR

This year, Ramadan is ushered in under extraordinary circumstances never witnessed before: half of humanity is remaining indoors, and places of worship, including mosques, remain closed in much of the world. And yet Ramadan can provide the spiritual support needed as we face the Covid-19 pandemic, reminding us to count our blessings and elevating the virtue of patience. At a time when Muslims cannot gather to pray at their local mosque, or visit the holy sites of Islam, the spirit of Ramadan and worship provides solace during this challenging period.

The challenges of Ramadan this year offer us an opportunity to reflect upon what is truly essential in our lives, and to cherish the things and the people we may have taken for granted prior to the pandemic.

One of the most cherished traditions during the holy month, in which Muslims are called upon to undertake a daily fast, is the ritual of Iftar, in which family and friends gather in the evening to break the fast together. It is an occasion in which spirituality intermingles with lighter social moments. During this time, worshippers often read passages from the Quran to deepen their understanding of Islam. Muslims take the time to relax together during Suhoor, the final meal before starting the next day's fast.

Eating out, watching TV with family and friends, praying together – these communal moments can no longer take place in the same way in the age of physical distancing. But Muslims around the world are finding creative ways to celebrate with loved ones without putting them at risk.

Among the most important of its traditions, Ramadan is a month of compassion and giving to the poor in their time of need. Measures to fight the coronavirus pandemic have taken a toll on the global economy, leaving many people out of work or struggling to make ends meet on reduced salaries.

In the spirit of giving, the various Auxiliary organisations of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community around the world held online charity events to raise money to donate to the needy in these uncertain times. The scheme 'Ramadhan Sadqa Appeal' was launched in the UK by Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya, which saw them raise funds of over £70K to go towards helping those most vulnerable. So let us remember those in need this Ramadan, and contribute to alleviating their suffering as much as we can.

WELCOME TO

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CONTENTS

MEET THE TEAM

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بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَعَدَ اللّٰہُ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مِنۡکُمۡ وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَیَسۡتَخۡلِفَنَّہُمۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ
کَمَا اسۡتَخۡلَفَ الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِہِمۡ

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful

Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them;

(Surah An Nur, Ch 24:V56)

The Promise of the Establishment of Khilafat

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مِنۡكُمۡ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسۡتَخۡلِفَنَّهُمۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ كَمَا اسۡتَخۡلَفَ الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ

The present verse embodies a promise that Muslims will be vouchsafed both spiritual and temporal leadership. The promise is made to the whole Muslim nation but the institution of Khilafat will take a palpable form in the person of certain individuals who will be the Prophet's Successors and the representatives of the whole nation. They will be, as it were, Khilafat personified.

The verse further says that the fulfilment of this promise will depend on the Muslims' observing the Prayer and giving the Zakah and on their obeying the Messenger of God in all religious and temporal matters concerning the nation. When they will have fulfilled these conditions, the boon of Khilafat will be bestowed upon them and they will be made the leaders of nations; their state of fear will give place to a condition of safety and security, Islam will reign supreme in the world, and above all the Oneness and Unity of God—the real purpose and object of Islam—will become firmly established.

The promise of the establishment of Khilafat is clear and unmistakable. As the Holy Prophet is now humanity's sole guide for all time, his Khilafat must continue to exist in one form or another in the world till the end of time, all other Khilafats having ceased to exist. This is among many others the Holy Prophet's distinct superiority over all other Prophets and Messengers of God. Our age has witnessed his greatest spiritual Khalifah in the person of Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

The verse may also be regarded as embodying a prophecy which was made at a time when Islam was very weak and idols were being worshipped throughout Arabia and the Muslims being small in number feared for their very lives, and yet in the course of only a generation the prophecy was literally fulfilled. Idolatry disappeared from Arabia and Islam became firmly established not only in Arabia but also reigned supreme in the whole world and the followers of the Holy Prophet, erstwhile regarded as the dregs and scum of humanity, became the leaders and teachers of nations.

(Five Volume Commentary, Volume 4, pp 2288-2290)

اَللّٰھُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰی مُحَمَّدٍ وَّعَلٰی اٰلِ مُحَمَّدٍ کَمَا صَلَّیْتَ عَلٰی اِبْرَاھِیْمَ وَعَلٰی اٰلِ اِبْرَاھِیْمَ اِنَّکَ حَمِیْدٌ مَّجِیْدٌ
اَللّٰھُمَّ بَارِکْ عَلٰی مُحَمَّدٍ وَّعَلٰی اٰلِ مُحَمَّدٍ کَمَا بَارَکْتَ عَلٰی اِبْرَاھِیْمَ وَعَلٰی اٰلِ اِبْرَاھِیْمَ اِنَّکَ حَمِیْدٌ مَّجِیْدٌ

عَنِ النُّعْمَانِ ابْنِ بَشِیْرٍؓ عَنْ حُذَیْفَةؓ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُوْلُ ﷺ تَکُوْنُ النُّبُوَّةُ فِیْکُمْ مَا شَاءَ اللّٰہُ اَنْ تَکُوْنَ، ثُمَّ یَرْفَعُھَا اِذَا شَاءَ اَنْ یَّرْفَعَھَا، ثُمَّ تَکُوْنُ خِلَافَةً عَلٰی مِنْھَاجِ النُّبُوَّةِ، فَتَکُوْنُ مَا شَاءَ اللّٰہُ اَنْ تَکُوْنَ، ثُمَّ یَرْفَعُھَا اِذَا شَاءَ اللّٰہُ اَنْ یَّرْفَعَھَا، ثُمَّ تَکُوْنُ مُلْکًا عَاضًّا، فَیَکُوْنُ مَا شَاءَ اللّٰہُ اَنْ یَکُوْنَ، ثُمَّ یَرْفَعُھَا اِذَا شَاءَ اَنْ یَّرْفَعَھَا، ثُمَّ تَکُوْنُ مُلْکًا جَبْرِیَّةً، فَتَکُوْنُ مَا شَاءَ اللّٰہُ اَنْ تَکُوْنَ، ثُمَّ یَرْفَعُھَا اِذَا شَاءَ اَنْ یَّرْفَعَھَا، ثُمَّ تَکُوْنُ خِلَافَةً عَلٰی مِنْھَاجِ النُّبُوَّةِ ثُمَّ سَکَتَ

Nauman Ibn Bashirra narrates:

“Holy Prophet May Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him said; Prophethood shall remain among you as long as Allah shall will. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of prophethood for as long as He shall will and then bring about its end. A tyrannical monarchy will then follow and will remain as long as Allah shall will and then come to an end. There will follow thereafter monarchical despotism to last as long as Allah shall will and come to an end upon His decree. There will then emerge Khilafat on precept of Prophethood.” The Holy Prophet said no more.

(Masnad Ahmad)

EXCERPT FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH[AS]

So dear friends! since it is the Sunnatullah, from time immemorial, that God Almighty shows two Manifestations so that the two false joys of the opponents be put to an end, it is not possible now that God should relinquish His Sunnah of old. So do not grieve over what I have said to you; nor should your hearts be distressed. For it is essential for you to witness the second Manifestation also, and its Coming is better for you because it is everlasting the continuity of which will not end till the Day of Judgement. And that second Manifestation cannot come unless I depart. But when I depart, God will send that second Manifestation for you which shall always stay with you just as promised by God in Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya. And this promise is not for my person. Rather the promise is with reference to you, as God [addressing me] says: I shall make this Jama'at who are your followers, prevail over others till the Day of Judgment. Thus it is inevitable that you see the day of my departure, so that after that day the day comes which is the day of ever-lasting promise.

(Al Wasiyat (The Will) Page 7)

Miraj & Isra

Was the Miraj and Isra a physical or spiritual journey?

By: Jalees Ahmed, UK

"Say, 'Holy is my Lord! I am not but a man sent as a messenger'"

Part I

After the demise of the Holy Prophetﷺ, the beauties of Islam continued to spread and numerous individuals from various religions were entering the fold of Islam. With so many from different religious backgrounds accepting Islam, similar to the case with the past religions, many beliefs and notions contrary to the real teachings, influenced by other doctrines, managed to rear its ugly head into the Muslim belief.

Today, a common misconception non-Ahmadi Muslims have adopted is the issue of the life and death of Jesusعليه السلام son of Mary. Many Muslims believe that the Messiah of the latter-day, who was prophesied by the Holy Prophetﷺ, is none other than Jesusعليه السلام son of Mary who, as they assert, is still alive and will "soon" descend from heaven.

One argument non-Ahmadi Muslims present to backup this false notion is the incident of the Miraj & Isra. They say that the journey the Holy Prophetﷺ undertook to the heavens was a physical journey. Thus, they allude to the belief that just as God was able to physically raise the Holy Prophetﷺ towards Himself; so too is the case with Jesusعليه السلام and therefore, according to them, the matter of Jesus'sعليه السلام physical ascension should not be a hard incident to believe.

In this article, we will debunk the notion of 'physical ascension' and show through the Quran, Hadith and logical proofs and verifications, how the Miraj and Isra were in-fact two spiritual journeys and not physical.

It should be clear; the condition Muslims are in today was prophesied by the Holy Prophetﷺ himself.

It is reported that the Holy Prophetﷺ said that a time will come upon the Muslim Ummah where they will resemble the Jews. Thus, just as the Jews did not accept Jesusعليه السلام as the Messiah and said that Elijah would physically descend, so too is the condition of the Muslims today; who have rejected Hazrat Ahmadعليه السلام and say that Jesusعليه السلام will physically descend.

Before moving on, it is necessary to briefly mention the incident of both the Miraj & Isra. Let it be clear that the Miraj and Isra are two different incidents that occurred during the time of the Holy Prophetﷺ. The Miraj was the spiritual journey where the Holy Prophet was shown the heavens, met with previous Prophets, and was eventually presented before the royal court of Allah. The Isra is the name of the spiritual journey where the Holy Prophetﷺ was taken from Mecca to Jerusalem. As we progress, further references will be provided from Hadith with regard to both incidents.

Beginning with the Holy Quran, let us see what 'the Perfect Book' and the Holy Prophetﷺ have said about physical ascension. It is mentioned in Sura Bani Israil that the disbelievers of Mecca expressed their readiness to accept Islam but first demanded certain signs to be fulfilled. They said to the Holy Prophetﷺ that they will not believe until heﷺ ascended to the sky and brought down a book for them to read.

Upon this, God revealed to the Holy Prophetﷺ: "Say, 'Holy is my Lord! I am not but a man sent as a messenger.'" (Surah Bani Israil, Ch.17:94)

Thus, this very emphatically establishes that it is not God's practice for a man to physically ascend to the heavens and come back to earth. Yes, however, we cannot limit God's power and say that He cannot do something. Nevertheless, the question here is not about the power of God, but about His practice. God openly states in the Quran that He never goes in contradiction of His own practice (Surah Al Fatir, Ch.35:44).

وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَحْوِيلًا

Thus, since it is a common practice that man lives his limited days on earth and only returns to God upon demise, hence; it will be wrong and against God's practice to say and believe that a physical body can be raised to God.

With regard to the Miraj, the Holy Quran, in Sura An Najm, clearly states:

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ

"The heart of the Prophet was lied not regarding what he saw" (53:11)

From this, it is clearly understood that it was a heartfelt vision not a bodily or physical ascension. For if it were the physical body and physical eyes of the Prophetﷺ that witnessed this journey then what was the need for the Holy Quran to mention "Al-Fu'aad". Thus, as the Quran mentions the word "Al-Fu'aad", it clearly alludes to the fact that this was a heart felt journey i.e., spiritual.

Now, let's look at the different Ahadith of the incident of the Miraj, and see if it gives further evidence for it being a 'spiritual journey'. In one narration of Sahih Bukhari, Kitab Bad'a-ul-Khaq, it is mentioned that this vision was shown to the Holy Prophetﷺ in state of sleep and wakefulness (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 3207). In another narration of Bukhari, Kitab Al-Touheed, at the end of the full hadith regarding the Miraj, it is stated that:

قَالَ وَاسْتَيْقَظَ وَهُوَ فِي مَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

Meaning that the Holy Prophetﷺ then woke while he was in the Sacred Mosque (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No.7517). Clearly indicating that it was dream like vision experienced by the Holy Prophetﷺ.

In the very same hadith, it is stated:

وَهُوَ نَائِمٌ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

"..while he was sleeping in the Sacred Mosque.."

Meaning that this journey took place whilst the Holy Prophetﷺ was asleep in the Sacred Moqsue.

And again, it is stated:

"... his eyes were asleep but his heart was not asleep.."

In a Hadith recorded in Bukhari, Book of Prophetic Commentary on the Quran (Hadith No. 4855), it is mentioned that Hazrat Ayesha was once asked if the Holy Prophet ever saw God with his physical eyes:

يَا أُمَّتَاهُ هَلْ رَأَى مُحَمَّدٌ صلى الله عليه وسلم رَبَّهُ

Upon this, Hazrat Ayesha replied:

لَقَدْ قَفَّ شَعَرِي مِمَّا قُلْتَ

"What you have said makes my hair stand on end!"
Hazrat Ayesha went on to say:

"Know that if somebody tells you one of the following three things, he is a liar: Whoever tells you that Muhammad saw his Lord, is a liar."

Then, Hazrat Ayesha recited the following verses: "Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. And He is the Incomprehensible, the All-Aware." (Sura Al An'am, Ch.6:104)

"And it is not for a man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or by sending a messenger to reveal by His Command what He pleases. Surely, He is High, Wise." (Surah Al Shura, Ch. 42:51)

She further said:

"And whoever tells you that the Prophet knows what is going to happen tomorrow, is a liar."

She then recited: "And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow." (Surah Al Luqman, Ch.31:34)

She added: "And whoever tells you that he concealed (some of Allah's orders), is a liar."

Then, lastly, she recited: "O Messenger! Convey to thee people what has been revealed to thee from thy Lord." (Surah Al Maidah, Ch.5:67)

Thus, with substantial evidence provided, how can anyone state and believe that the Miraj was a physical journey? What greater evidence could be presented than the Holy Quran and Ahadith?

Even Hazrat Ayesha, about whom the Holy Prophet said to learn half the religion from, has testified that physical ascension in the night of Miraj did not happen, rather that it was a spiritual journey experienced by the Prophet's heart.

However, if someone is still not convinced, then such a person will have to answer the following questions.

In the Hadith of the Miraj it is stated that:

"..A golden tray full of wisdom and belief was brought to me.." (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 3207)

If this was a physical journey, then one will be forced to accept that 'wisdom' and 'belief' are in fact physical objects that can be brought in a tray and presented. This obviously goes against logic.

Reading on, the Hadith states that the chest of the Holy Prophet was cut open and his heart was washed and cleansed with Zamzam water. Now, it does not take a genius to realise that all this cannot take place physically for such actions would then require more questions to be answered. Such as, how is it possible and more importantly, what was the need for it? Will we be compelled to believe that the Holy Prophet's heart and chest needed to be cleansed, whereas the rest of the Muslim Ummah did not undergo such an incident. Is that to say that they possessed such clean and pure hearts that it was only necessary for the Holy Prophet's heart to be cleansed? Such a belief and notion cannot be accepted.
The Hadith goes on to state that the

Holy Prophet ﷺ then preceded to enter heaven where he met with previous Prophets عليه السلام.

Now, it is important to note what the Quran and hadith say about heaven. In Surah Al Hijr, Ch.15:49, the Holy Quran clearly states:

لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ

"Fatigue shall not touch them there, nor shall they ever me ejected therefrom"

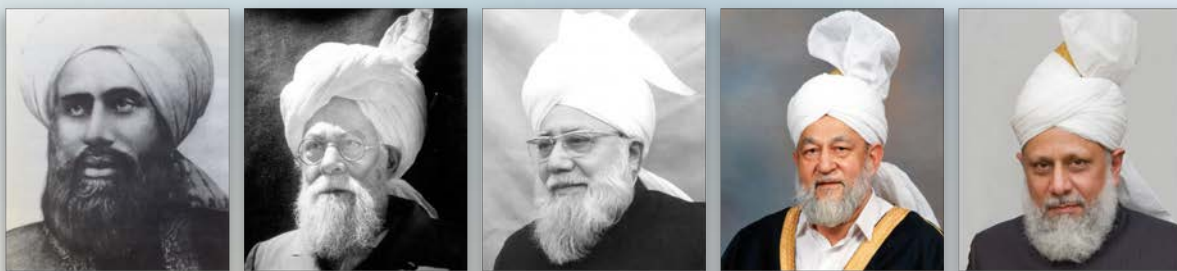
Thus, if the Quran states that upon entering heaven, nobody will be removed, then how can our non-Ahmadi brothers claim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was once in heaven and then removed.

Again, in a hadith, narrated by Hazrat Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه, it is clearly mentioned that the Holy Prophet ﷺ stated: "Allah said, 'I have prepared for My righteous slaves (such excellent things) as no eye has ever seen, nor an ear has ever heard nor a human heart can ever think of.'

Here, it is clearly stated that, "no eye has ever seen, nor any ear has ever heard".
I ask my non-Ahmadi Muslims, was the Holy Prophet ﷺ, God forbid, lying upon making this statement? Thus, it will be against logic and against the noble words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to believe that He (sa) went to heaven with his physical body.

Now, if such an incident is to be taken as a literal journey, many more things will need deeper explanation and only leads to further false ideas and notions being carved. It is as if the non-Ahmadis are continuously carving a sculpture to fit their own narrative. Such actions resemble what the Jews were accused of doing when they chose certain passages from their scriptures and disregarded the rest.

The main reason why our non-Ahmadi brothers continue to peruse that the Miraj was a physical ascension because they know that once they say and except that the Isra was a spiritual ascension, they know that their claim of Jesus عليه السلام still being alive in heaven will have no ground to stand on and once a carved sculpture loses its ground shatters, and the sound of its shattering will echo throughout the world.

For part II of this article we will delve into the reality of the journey of Isra and see what the Quran and Hadith have said about it.

"Love & Devotion of the Ahmadiyya Community for Khilafat "

Friday Sermon Summary 29th May 2020

After reciting the Tashahhud, Ta'awwuz, and Surah Al-Fatihah, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) mentioned that the Promised Messiah (as) thanked God Almighty for the sincere community he has been given. There are countless examples of sincerity and loyalty of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (sa) and also of the Promised Messiah (as).

The Promised Messiah (as) stated that he was given the glad tidings of Khilafat after his demise, in the book Al-Wassiyat. This promise was for a lasting caliphate that shall continue till the Day of Judgement, providing the Community remains loyal and sincere in their relationship with Khilafat.

His Holiness (aba) said that all Ahmadis around the world must develop these sentiments of dedication and do their utmost to act upon the instructions of the Khalifa. There is a strong connection between the Khalifa and his Community, and vice versa. There are thousands of incidents that give testimony to this.

Hazrat Maulana Hakeem Nooruddin (ra) Khalifatul Masih I

His Holiness (aba) then stated that the Editor of Al-Badr wrote with regards to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I (ra), that there are so many people who are expressing their love for him and who pray fervently for him.

One Companion asked Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I (ra) for some advice, to which he replied, 'you have carried out all that I have asked. Only one thing remains, and that is to memorise the Holy Quran'. Despite being 65 years of age he put the entire Holy Quran to memory, in accordance with the instruction of Huzur.

Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra) Khalifatul Masih II

His Holiness (aba) said that when Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) instructed his Community to increase preaching efforts to others, one youngster went to Afghanistan without a passport for this task. He was taken to jail, but he continued his preaching there too, so they sent him back to India.

However, upon returning, this young man did not even go to see his elderly mother and presented himself before Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) and expressed his willingness and desire to immediately travel to another country where Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) would direct him.

Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad (rh) Khalifatul Masih III

Then, His Holiness (aba) mentioned that during the Khilafat of Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad (rh), one woman named Naima Latif Sahiba, showed great sincerity and obedience by being the the only one in her vicinity to wear the Islamic veil in that time, right after listening to an address of Huzur (rh) on the topic of the Islamic veil.

In 1974, when Ahmadis were being targeted and persecuted, one Ahmadi sold his land to buy another closer to Rabwah. However, when he informed Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (rh), he expressed his disappointment and told him he should have kept it. So this Ahmadi did all he could to buy it back, and did so at a much higher price, then informed Huzur (rh) that he acted upon his instructions.

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) Khalifatul Masih IV

His Holiness (aba) said that during the Khilafat of Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), there were extraordinary changes and developments in Africa due to the work of the missionaries sent there. The people developed such a love and devotion for Khilafat that they could not imagine. The missionaries admitted that this was not from their own efforts, but it was all from God Almighty.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) Khalifatul Masih V

When His Holiness (aba) visited Nigeria, there were only two hours in which the people could see him. Even so, 30,000 people gathered to meet him and the men and women were restless in their efforts to meet him. His Holiness (aba) said that in Ghana, they bought a vast plot of land, where they would hold the Jalsa Salana [Annual Convention].

Despite the large number of people and lack of space, not a single person complained and they showed great patience. When one or two of them were asked about this, they said we are happy to just have the chance to attend the Jalsa Salana, so we can bear hardships for these few days.

He also said that the Community in Burkina Faso was only established a few decades ago, but even still, His Holiness (aba) could see that they were so advanced in their devotion and love for Khilafat. Not all of them are born Ahmadis, but within a few years they develop such sincerity and are filled with love for the Khalifa.

Some people are of the opinion that Americans are worldly people and have less regard for their faith. However, they too are full of sincerity and dedication, and they express this also in their letters, and even give up their jobs to serve the Community and the Khalifa.

His Holiness (aba) then gave many more examples of this love and dedication of members of the Community all around the world, and how they make sacrifices for the sake of Khilafat.

Hence, it is God Almighty Who places this love and fidelity in the hearts of members of the Community all around the world. May Allah Almighty enable us all to increase in our faith, love and sincerity. May Allah Almighty enable us to continue witnessing His promises come to fulfilment. Ameen.

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HOW TO: IMPROVE YOUR READING DURING LOCKDOWN

By: Jazib Mahmood, Ghana

The importance of reading cannot be exaggerated enough. In an increasingly paperless world, reading must find a place. Without it, we risk facing the world with an empty mind and one perspective; our own. A 2009 study at the University of Sussex found that reading can reduce stress by up to 68%. It works better and faster than other relaxation methods, such as listening to music or drinking a hot cup of tea. This is because your mind is invited into a literary world that is free from the stressors that plague your daily life. In uncertain times like these, what better option is there than to lose ourselves in a good book?

The Jama'at's official website contains thousands of books. The magazines and periodicals of the Jama'at are also available to us. All benefits aside, the blessings and knowledge one can derive from these sources is unbelievable. There are so many books out there worth reading. In our Jama'at literature, there are 23 volumes of Ruhani Khazain (blessed writings of the Promised Messiah), there are 5 volumes of Malfuzaat (discourse of the Promised Messiah), 3 volumes of Ishtiharaat (the announcements of the Promised Messiah), and 4 volumes of Maktoobaat-e-Ahmad (the letters of the Promised Messiah). Then Anwaar-ul-Uloom (books of Hazrat Musleh Maud) number to 26 volumes. His sermons over the span of 52 years of Khilafat number to 39 volumes. His commentary of the Holy Qur'an has 10 volumes. Apart from these books there are thousands of books written by our Khulafa and the scholars of the Jama'at. Magazines like this one, Al-Hakam and Review of Religions and many more are open to us to read and improve our knowledge. An ocean of knowledge lies at our feet waiting to be waded through.

During Ramadan, since so many of us are stuck at home, reading can be a welcoming escape. As long as we're able to, we must make efforts to read. As Mark Twain puts it, 'One who does not read is no different from one who cannot read'.

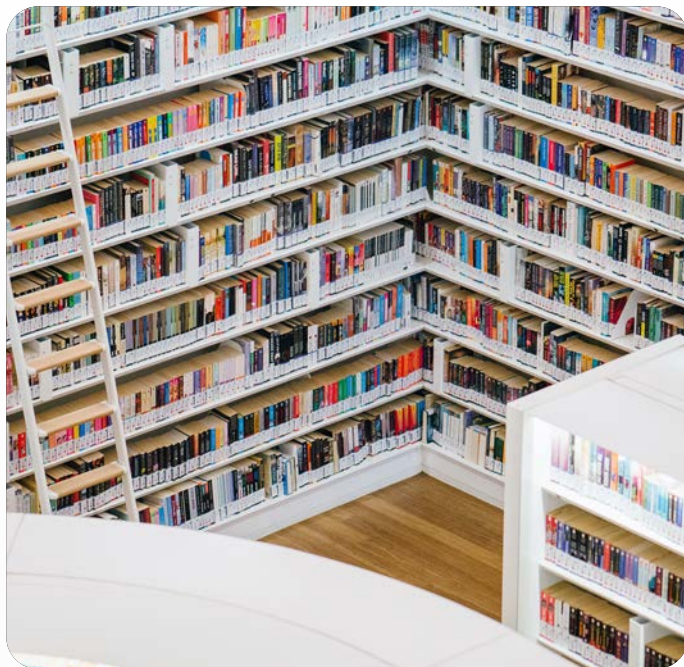
The problem is, it is often cumbersome to pick up a book and read. It can be exhausting to read. We can't always determine how best to approach the process. Some find it boring. Others find it repelling. Like all things however, reading has a technique. There is such a thing as a good reading habit and a bad reading habit. It is often thought that reading is simply that; reading. However, one can improve the art of reading through well-tested methods.

It can be quite gratifying to open up a book and be lifted from one's home into the world of an author. It can open worlds while you're sitting on the couch drinking tea.

One problem most people have with reading is that it takes time. We sometimes don't even start a book because it's just too long. The simple solution here is to increase your speed. Not to dizzying heights, just a tad bit faster to help us cope with the constant increase in reading material.

At a young age, when we're taught how to read, we are told to read aloud. And while that's certainly necessary, it becomes a complication for us as we grow up. As you're reading this sentence, you're probably reading it in your head as well. And this is slowing you down. Try to read this sentence without repeating the words in your head. It may seem an impossible task at first but with a little effort it is possible to bully your brain into keeping quiet. With time and a bit of practice, you should be able to read faster than you speak.

Here it is necessary to reassure the reader that increasing speed doesn't have to mean that your comprehension will reduce. It shouldn't. Speeding up can help you to develop a rhythm that will aid your concentration and increase your understanding. Then, it is important to avoid back-tracking by telling yourself that you'll have a chance to go over the sentence again. This makes sure your brain shows no complacency in focusing the first time around. If you do miss the occasional phrase or a sentence doesn't make sense, keep moving. With time your comprehension should increase. After a while, you should notice that your comprehension is better than it used to be.

To make things easier, use your finger to guide your eyes on the page. The thing is, your eyes, remarkable as they are, run wild when reinless. To prove it, try this little exercise. While keeping your head stationary, scan the room in front of you by slowly gliding your eyes from left to right without stopping at any point. You will find the task virtually impossible because your eyes will want to stop and focus on the various objects along their path of vision. Now repeat the exercise, but this time use a pointed finger held out in front of you to act as a guide. If you focus on the tip of your finger as you move it slowly from left to right, you'll notice that your eyes are now able to slide smoothly in one long sweep. You'll still be able to pick up the objects in the background even though they'll be slightly blurred. But your eyes will be relaxed because they're no longer in the

driver's seat. They're in the passenger seat enjoying the view. Reading can do the same for you. If you use a pointer to guide your eyes along the line you'll notice that your reading is smoother.

Another technique you could try is don't read every word at a time. You can read blocks of words at once. After all, words and letters carry no meaning on their own. Words don't convey ideas, sentences do. You don't need to focus on each letter as it runs across your glance. Your brain is more than capable of processing short phrases and groups of words incredibly quickly. This also creates a picture of the text in your head. It's like stepping back and observing something from a distance. It's never a bad thing. And you might even spot something new.

You should also begin reading with an idea of what you're about to be told. That's what titles and blurbs are for. Once you have an idea of the book you should find comprehension easier since your brain is somewhat prepared for the information about to be fed to it. It is also a good idea to increase your vocabulary. This

way, you will find fewer reasons to stop and look up a strange word.

Another problem for some people is the environment. A poor choice of environment can harm your reading. When reading, you should turn off your phone, and retreat to a spot where it's difficult for you to be bothered. If you're constantly checking your phone while reading, it will make comprehension all the more difficult. You should also sit at a spot with good lighting so that you can see the text clearly. If you're reading digitally try increasing the font size of your text. Find a comfortable, good posture.

You don't have to speed your way through books. If you envision people reading at light speeds, don't. It can't be done. I'm not talking about reading a 1,000-page book in an hour. Some areas of a book or an article can be difficult to comprehend. You should slow down for those. But in cases where you're finding comprehension easier, speed up! These guidelines will serve to make your reading faster than it was and your comprehension better. But you don't have to run. Find a pace that you're comfortable with and stick with it. And most importantly, read more. To attain efficiency in any field requires more attention. Simply put, practice makes perfect. So read more to increase your familiarity with books and language.

As Ahmadi Muslims, reading already forms an integral part of our lives. The Holy Qur'an is read by millions of people worldwide daily. During the month of Ramadan, particular attention is paid to this vital part of our spiritual exercises. Reading the literature of our community is also very important.

The writings of the Promised Messiah (as) are so powerful that one simply can't speedread through them if comprehension fails to catch up.

Our beloved Huzoor (atba) also reads ardently. Huzoor (atba) is reported to read some parts of the books of the Promised Messiah (as), the Jama'at's commentaries of the Holy Qur'an and other literature of our Jama'at every day. This is apart from the daily recitation of the Holy Qur'an. In Huzoor's office, we can clearly see hundreds of bookmarks in the books on the shelves. These books are well read.
The true purpose of reading (enjoying, understanding, benefiting, and improving) a book shouldn't be lost in the hopes of reading faster. It should serve to make the act more tolerable and perhaps even elating. In Eat This Book, Eugene Peterson says, "Reading is an immense gift, but only if the words are assimilated, taken into the soul—eaten, chewed, gnawed, and received in unhurried delight."

CORONAVIRUS INSTRUCTIONS

Friday Sermon Delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V aba on 6th March 2020

OUTBREAK OF THE CORONAVIRUS

We must all adhere to the precautionary measures that are set out by governments and the health departments.

From the outset, after consultation with some homeopaths, I advised about the use of certain homeopathic remedies, as a precautionary measure as well as for treatment.

Thus, we ought to use them and at the same time we must adhere to the precautionary measures that have been outlined.

May Allah the Almighty grant cure through them.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

In our case – who pray five times a day and also perform the ablution in the correct manner, including cleaning the nose with water etc, then this high standard of hygiene is such that it can compensate the shortage of sanitizers.

If the ablution is performed in the correct manner, this can not only help towards physical cleanliness, but the subsequent prayer, then in turn becomes a means for their spiritual cleanliness as well.

Moreover, in these days we must pay particular attention towards our prayers.

Furthermore, it is being advised that one should refrain from shaking hands and this is also extremely important, as one does not know what the hands are contaminated with.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

In relation to this, it is advised that you should avoid large gatherings.

People coming to the mosque should err on the side of caution.

There are certain etiquettes of the mosque, among them is that if one is suffering from something such as a contagious illness – which can affect others – they should avoid coming to the mosque.

One preventative measure mentioned by the Doctors is that one's hands and mouth should always be clean

If one's hands are unclean, they should not touch their face, or ensure that they use hand sanitizers or they should wash their hands regularly.

OUTBREAK OF THE CORONAVIRUS

Allah the Almighty knows best to what extent this epidemic will spread and what He has decreed

If this virus has emerged owing to the Divine wrath of God, as since the advent of the Promised Messiah (as) there has been a significant increase in the number of epidemics, diseases, earthquakes and storms

Then one ought to turn towards God Almighty more than ever before to be safeguarded from these.

Every Ahmadi ought to pay particular attention towards prayers and also to improve their spiritual condition.